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THE TOLLING BELL.

A SABBATH MORNING TALE.

BY AZA KLEUBS.

Not many years ago, in one of my Summer rambles, I found myself one beautiful Sabbath morning the guest of a worthy and intelligent family, in a quiet country village.

The early breakfast was over; parents and children had joined in reading a chapter in the bible; Mr. Shelton, the head of the family, had then offered up a fervent prayer, at the conclusion of which we all arose from our knees, when our ears were greeted by the clear, deep peals of the ringing church bells.

'Can it be so late?' exclaimed Mrs. Shelton, looking at the clock. 'Our time-piece must be slow.'

'That's not the first bell for church,' answered her husband solemnly. 'There has been a death in the village. The bell is going to toll for Martin Lord.'

'Such, then, is his happy end," mused his wife. 'Well, it would be wrong to mourn his death, for I believe him vastly better off; he derived no comfort from earth. If death was ever a merciful providence, it is so in his case.'

'Is it a person who has been long sick?' I asked.

Instead of answering my question directly, Mrs. Shelton, said: 'There is a very melancholy history connected with that young man. It is quite sometime since the excitement occasioned by this strange tragedy died away; but the tolling of that bell this morning must bring it back forcibly to every heart. Perhaps you may find the story which brings about this tolling, interesting.'

I expressed my desire to listen to the narration, upon which she gave me the following details of the story, which I give you with only a slight deviation from the original:

"Martin Load was once the flower and hope of one of the most respected families in the village. His amiable disposition and superior intellect procured for him universal love and esteem. Although of a slight figure, and pale features, which indicated a constitution by no means robust, Martin was remarked for his uncommon beauty and indeed, his fine, noble forehead, shaded by locks of soft, brown hair, his large, expressive blue eyes, straight nose, thin Grecian nostrils, and rather voluptuous mouth, entitled him in some measure to that consideration. He was a great favorite among the ladies, both old and young; but he never showed any marked partiality to any one until he became acquainted with Isabella Ashton, the daughter of our late clergyman, who died of grief about a year ago.

No two beings could be more different. Isabella was the youngest and most thoughtless girl in our village. She could have little sympathy with a person of such deep feelings and elevated intellect as Martin; and beautiful as she was, it seemed strange that he should have given his love to her. There is no doubt but she was attached to him; perhaps she loved him as well as she was capable of loving any one; but in this instance, as in all others, her affections were secondary to her love of sarcasm and mischief. Martin and Isabella had been pointed out as lovers, by village gossips, for several months,—he was now nineteen, and she was the same age—when the tragedy occurred, which the tolling of the bell has recalled to my mind.

It was on an Autumn evening, nearly five years since, that Isabella took advantage of her father's absence, and had a social gathering of young people at their house. Martin of course was one of the party of fair youths and maidens, who, being under no restraint from the gravity of the clergyman, who was not looked for home until late, the company enjoyed themselves freely with jests, songs, and social games. The hour at which such parties usually broke up had already passed, and yet there seemed to be no relaxation in the gayety of the young people. During the fun now binding them, some one innocently introduced the subject of ghosts, saying report had it that one had lately been seen taking advantage of the solemnity of midnight and the stillness thereof, in the vicinity of the church-yard, patrolling and keeping guard over his sleeping comrades.

'Nonsense, it is a silly report,' interrupted Martin. 'Nobody believes that one has been seen there, and I doubt if there is a person in this room who believes in the existence of such things.'

'Hush Martin, you do, yourself; you know you do; although you are ashamed to own it,' cried Isabella; but Martin only laughed. 'Come, now,' continued the thoughtless girl, 'I can very soon prove to the company and to yourself, the fact that you have some fear of their existence. Go to the church yard alone in the dark, and then declare, if you can, you had no dread, felt no fear.'

'And what will that prove?'

'Why you will be frightened though you should see nothing. Your fears would put your belief to the test. How could you be afraid if you did not feel there was something to be afraid of?'

'I don't think your logic the best in the world,' said Martin laughingly. 'Men are often troubled with fear when their reason tells them there is no cause to fear. But I am forced to deny your assertion that a journey to the churchyard even at midnight would frighten me—no, not in the least.'

'How very brave your language,' exclaimed Isabella, indulging in her customary mode of sarcasm. 'Yes, indeed, you are tremendously brave now, and yet no longer than yesterday, your mother told you would not help kill a rabbit.'

'I never like to cause or witness pain,' replied Martin, much hurt by Isabella classifying bravery and tender feeling together.

'Ha! ha! ha! a nice way to get out of it, an excellent excuse, yet it can't save you, for I am resolved to put your bravery to the test. You are brave enough, to be sure, but tender hearted; so then come, now win your laurels, you dare not go to the churchyard this night alone. You are not half so courageous as you would have us believe. Whether you think there are ghosts or not, you are afraid of them.'

Martin was extremely sensitive; but the sarcasm of nobody except Isabella could have stung him so to the quick. Scorning the imputation of cowardice he was ready and willing to do any desperate thing through the instrumentality of which he might prove his courage. 'But,' said he, 'although I have no more fear of churchyards and ghosts than I entertain of orchards and apple trees, I am not going to walk half a mile merely to be laughed at.'

'Ha! ha! another plea; but you shall not escape,' laughed Isabella. 'Here, before these our friends, I promise that this ring shall be yours,' she continued, displaying one given her by her old lover, which Martin had to part with, 'provided you go to the churchyard alone, in the dark, and declare, on your honor, when you return, that you were not the least afraid.'

'Agreed,' said Martin, buttoning his coat, for the night was chill.

'And as an evidence that you go the entire distance, you can bring back with you the iron pin which you will find at the entrance on the gate,' said Isabella.

Thus driven by taunts to a commission of folly, Martin took leave of the company, full of courage and spirit, and set out on his errand.

It was near a quarter of a mile to the churchyard, which was approached by a lonely, dreary path, seldom traveled except by mourners. It would be impossible to state precisely what happened to Martin on that gloomy road. I judge from the circumstances which afterwards came to light, and conjecture, his adventures must have been as I am about to relate.

Slight as he was in frame, and tender in feeling, he was not destitute of courage. I dare not think he was frightened by the sighing of the wind, or the rustling of dry autum leaves as he trod along the avenue pointing to the 'city of the dead.' He marched firmly to it, stopped a moment, I have no doubt, to gaze sadly but not fearingly, upon the white tombstones gleaming faintly in the dark and dessolate ground, for the stars shone brilliantly in the clear, cold sky above. All this must have drawn in his mind the sweetest of solemnity. He found the pin, and started back, but had proceeded but a short distance, when, in the gloomiest part of the road, he noticed a white figure emerge from a clump of willows and making its steps towards him. It looked like a walking corpse in a winding sheet which which trailed upon the ground. All Martin's strength of nerve was gone in an instant. Courage gave way to desperation, his hair stood erect, and his blood run chill, yet he stood his ground. The spectre drew nearer, seeming to grow whiter and larger as it approached nearer, seeming to grow whiter and larger as it approched. We cannot tell what phrenzy seized upon the brain of the unhappy youth at that moment.

The guests at the clergyman's house heard terrific screams. Dreading some tragic termination to the farce, they rushed to the spot, one of the number carrying a lantern. They found Martin leaning on a prostrate form clutching convulsively its throat, while he still uttered frantic shrieks for help. His wild features exhibited the very extremity of terror. Only two of the most courageous young men dared approach him. One of them forced Martin to relax his hold on the throat of the figure, whilst the other tore away the folds of the sheet. At that moment the bearer of the lantern came up. Its light fell on the blood-stained, distorted features of Isabella. Martin uttered one more unearthly shriek, and fell lifeless upon the corpse. He never spake again, but lived—an idiot.

A frightful contusion on Isabella's temple bore evidence that in his phrenzy he had struck the supposed spectre with the iron pin. The blow was probably the cause of her death, although such a grasp as his hands must have given her throat, might alone have deprived her of breath. He never knew afterwards what he had done, for never again did one gleam of reason illumine the darkness of his soul; and yesterday morn his spirit was finally freed from its shackles of clay, and given life and light in a better world, which the tolling of that bell declares most solemnly.

* * * * * * *

That was indeed a sad, sad tale, and to this day I remember with what feeling it was told to me. I remained with that family two days, and when I occasionally muse over the wanderings of my early youth, it claims no small part in my reflections, for I remember 'twas there I heard the melancholy story of Martin Lord and Isabella Ashton.

[*Sumter News.*]

How Parson Blake Subdued his Horse.

'Well,' said Reuben, the story-teller, 'father always wanted a horse, because the folks in Greene live scattered, and he has so far to go to attend funerals and weddings, and visit schools you know; but he never felt as if he could afford to buy one. But one day he was coming afoot from Hildreth and a stranger asked him to ride. Father said:'

'That's a handsome horse you are driving. I should like to own such a horse myself.'

'What will you give me for him?'

'Do you want to sell?' says father.

'Yes, I do, and I'll sell cheap too,' says he.

'Oh, well,' says father, 'it's no use talking, for I haven't the money to buy with.'

'Make me an offer,' says he.

'Well, just to put an end to the talk,' says father, 'I will give you seventy-five dollars for the horse.'

'You may have him,' says the man, as quick as a flash, 'but you'll repent of your bargain in a week.'

'Why, what ails the horse?' says father.

'Ails him? He's got old Nick in him, that's what ails him,' says he, 'If he has a will to go, he'll go; but if he takes a notion to stop, all creation can't start him. I've stood and beat that horse till the sweat run off me in streams. I've fired a gun off close to his ears; I've burnt shavings under him. I might have beat him to death and roasted him alive before he'd budge an inch.'

'I'll take the horse,' says father. 'What's his name?'

'George,' says the man.

'I shall call him George,' said father.

'Well, father brought him home, and we boys were mighty pleased, and we fixed a place for him in the barn, and curried him down and fed him well, and father said 'talk to him, boys, and let him know you feel friendly.' So we coaxed and petted him, and the next morning father harnessed him and got into the wagon to go. But George wouldn't stir a step. Father got out and patted him, and we boys brought him apples and clover tops, and once in a while father would say, 'Get up Georgia,' but he didn't strike a blow. By-and-by he says: 'This is going to take him. Well, Georgie, we will see, which has got the most patience, you or I.' So he sat in the wagon and took out the ske'etons——'

'Skeletons?' said Pepper, inquiringly.

'Of sermons, you know. Ministers always carry round a little book to put down things they think of when they are walking or riding. Father says he's planned out many a sermon when he was hoeing in the garden.'

'I saw him writing one down sitting on a potatoe hill,' said Levi.

'Well, don't be interrupting me or I shall never get through. Father sat full two hours before the horse was ready to start; but when he did, there was no more trouble for that day. The next morning it was the same thing over again, only Georgie gave in a little sooner. All the while it seemed as if father couldn't do enough for the horse. He was around the stable, feeding and fussing over him, and talking to him in his pleasant, gentle way (folks say father can quiet old crazy David Downing across the street, any time, by just speaking to him), and the third morning when he had fed, and curried and harnessed him with his own hands, there was a different look in the horse's eyes. But when father was ready to go, Georgie put his feet together and laid his ears back, and wouldn't stir. Well, Dove was playing about the yard, she brought her stool, and climbed up to the horse's head. Dove tell Pop what you said to Georgia that morning.'

'I gave him an awful talking to,' said the little girl. 'I told him it was perfectly 'ediculous for him to act so; that he'd come to a real good place to live, where everybody helped everybody; that he was a minister's horse, and ought to set a good example to all other horses. That's what I told him. Then I kissed him on the nose.'

'And what did Georgie do?'

'Why he heard every word I said, and when I got through he felt so 'shamed of himself he couldn't hold up his head; so he just dropped it, till it most touched the ground, and he looked as sheepish as if he had been stealing a hundred sheep.'

'Yes,' said Reuben, 'and when father told him to go he was off like a shot. He has never made any trouble since. That's the way father cured a balky horse. And that night, when he was unharnessed, he rubbed his head against father's shoulder, and told him as plain as a horse could speak, that he was sorry. He's tried to make up with father ever since for the trouble he made him. We boys have great times catching him when he is loose in the pasture. He's full of his tricks. He'll come galloping up, almost within reach, and when we think we are sure of him, he'll wheel and be off to the other end of the pasture. He'll fool with us that way half an hour, but father has only to stand at the bars and call his name and he walks up as quiet as an old sheep. Why I've seen him back himself between the shafts of the wagon many a time, to save father trouble. Father wouldn't take two hundred dollars for him to-dsy; and it doesn't cost much to keep him, for he eats anything you give him, Sis very often brings out some of her dinner to him.'

'He likes to eat out of a plate,' said Dove; 'it makes him think he's folks.'

'How much Did he Lose?'

A New York gentleman at dinner on board a Cunard steamer laid a wager with the Captain that he could not give him a correct answer, within a minute, to the following questions: "A Yankee rushed into a bootmaker's store, in Broadway, "Here, look sharp!" cried he, "just off for California—ship sales in half an hour—want a pair of boots—look alive!" Down tumbled the boots off she shelves; from which he was soon fitted. "How much?" "Five dollars." "Give me change for this fifty dollar bill—sharp—quick." The bootmaker, not having change, rushed to a money-changer. "Quick, give change for this fifty dollap bill—passenger just off to California!" and in a few minutes away ran the Yankee with his boots and his change—off to California, of course. In about an hour afterwards the money-changer came down to the boot-maker. "Hollo! see," quoth he, "this is a bad bill; pay me down fifty dollors at once;" which the poor fellow, much disgusted, had to do. Now how much did the bootmaker lose?"

"Come, Captain, answer, quick—no thinking about it. Eh, sir? How much did he lose?"

"Why, one hundred dollars, of course."

There was a shout of laughter round the table, and cries of "right," "wrong" in all directions.

"Why, you forgot" cried one, "that the boots were paid for." "What's that to do with it?" said another; "didn't the Yankee carry them off, and wasn't he bill bad?" "Of course it was," said his neighbor, "the Captain's right." "But you a sovereign he's wrong." "Done; what do you say it is?" "Why fifty dollars and the boots. Am I right, sir?"

But the New Yorker only laughed, and the chorus with him became louder. The question spread from table to table, right down, round the room, and up the port side, "What did the bootmaker lose?" until our ears were deafened with the answers and bets.

At length it reached a great big Boston man, who had set up among us a sort of oracle, for he wore long, straight black clothes of a clerical cut, and above his grey head and huge, flapping ears, a monstous shovel hat. We had all taken him for a superannuated bishop, until his friends let out that he was head of a great insurance office all his life, deep in all the misteries of policy and premium; so that verily it was thought assurance indeed, when a pert ensign said, "Now, I'll tell you what, old buyck bet you that you don't tell right off—what did the bootmaker lose?"

"Sir," said the big man with much gravity, "I decline the bet, but shall be happy to answer your question if you put it."

So he was told, and then the pert ensign again, "Now tell us quick, old boy—what did the bootmaker lose?" "What did he lose, sir? Why he lost, of course, fifty dollars on the one hand, which he returned to the moneychanger, and the forty-five which he gave the rogue—he lost, sir, of course, ninety-five dollars and the boots." But, alas! for the bishop-looking brother, a ludicrous shout of derision from some one who had found it out greeted his reply upon which he rose with a heavy frown and went on deck. Then rose the cry, "What did the bootmaker lose?" from all parts of the table. "Fifty- five dollars," cried a venturesome guess, "Forty-five," cried another, equally confident of his reasons. But the New Yorker smiled and laughed withal, telling us to give reasons for our answers. The very waiters carried it into the pantry, bake-house, and galleys, whence it went to the second-class passengers and the forecastle, until all round the ship, in a circle from the red-hot funnel where mostly we did congregate, was heard the familiar cry—"what did the bootmaker lose?" Reader, how much was it, and why!

An Irishman direct from the sod had got into a muss and was knocked down.

"And be sure you wouldn't be after batin' a man when he is down?" said Pat.

"Certainly not," said his antagonist.

"Faix, then I'll just lay where I am."

A Scared Duelist.

On a certain occasion since the beginning of 1871, the little town of Ouachita City, La., on the banks of the Ouachita River, about twentyfive miles above the city of Monroe, two gentlemen (Johnson and Jones) concluded to play a game of "seven-up" at $5. They took their time, and interspersed the game with several drinks. They finally finished the game. Johnson, being winner, raked in the money.

Jones studied about it a while. He made up his mind that it was not right for Johnson to take the money, as they were neighbors—not gamblers, anyway—and were only in fun. He said:

"You are not going to take that money are you?"

"Yes, indeed, I am," said Johnson.

"Well," said Jones, "you had as well take it out of my pocket."

"Now, Jones, take that back."

"I shall not take that back; and if you are not satisfied, help yourself in any way you choose."

"But Jones, I insist that you take it back, because I don't steal, myself."

"I shall not take it back; and I now repeat that you might as well have stolen that money out of my pocket. If you wish a difficulty, you can have it any way you like."

"Well, then, we will shoot it out," said Johnson.

"Very well, sir" said Jones, "mention your time and place."

Without further ceremony, all the arrangements were made for the duel to take place that evening. Many of the neighbors were there, and at once concluded to have the fight come off. They knew Johnson, who proposed the shooting, would back out unless he could be encouraged. They knew on the other hand, that Jones would stand up without flinching. The seconds loaded the pistols with blank cartridges, and informed Johnson of the fact, but did not let Jones into the secret. They did this to make Johnson stand, which, of course, made him fearless. He went to the appointed place, and Jones was there, cool and calm. The moment for action arrived, and all parties took their positions—the distance being ten paces. The pistols were handed to Johnson and Jones, in deathlike silence—every one being as serious as death. The count commenced:

"One!"

"Stop!" said Johnson. "It is understood by all parties that there ain't no bullets in these pistols!"

Jones, hearing this, and knowing nothing of it before, rather staggered forward, reeling, looked into the muzzle of his pistol, and cried out, "I'll be hanged if there ain't bullets in mine!" and at the same time pulled down on Johnson.

This was too much for Johnson. He broke for the nearest house, which was about two hundred yards, and they say he doubled up like a four-bladed knife, and has not been seen since, but sent word back that all might "shoot it out" who choose, but he wanted none in his. Jones won the field against all odds.

A GOOD JOKE.—A rich joke is told of Tim Murphy, of Atlanta, now dead, which is too good to be lost.

Tim was traveling on the West Point Road, on a train controlled by Conductor Moore and Engineer Buice. One night, about swo o'clock, the train ran into a large embankment of dirt, usually called a slide, by railroad men and miners, which completely upset everything to the injury of many passengers, including all ages, colors and sizes. The conductor and engineer, neither being injured, was going the rounds to see the extent of the disaster. They found the passengers piled out in utter confusion, one badly suspended from a window by her crinoline, hollowing in a mournful voice for help, who was rescued.

Next they came to Tim Murphy, who was going on at a mournful rate.

"Well," says Conductor Moore,—"how are you getting along." "Oh!" says Tim: "Scalded!" Upon examination, they found that the cooler, containing ice water, had upset its contents upon Tim and so great was his fright, that he imagined that he was badly scalded.

A wag, observing on the door of a house the name of two physicians, remarked that it put him in mind of a double-barrelled gun; if one missed, the other would be sure to kill.

"I Guess I'm the Man."

The praiseworthy frankness and entire absence of self pride that charactesizes the honest old farmer of Maine is illustrated by another honest farmer of the same State, who, desiring to purchase a yoke of oxen, and being informed that a certain wealthy farmer in Cumberland county had superior cattle for sale, went down thither to purchase. Meeting a man driving an ox team, he inquired:

"Can you inform me where Mr. West lives?"

"There's a number of Wests living around here. Which one do you wish to find?" returned the stranger, who was a stout built, keen-eyed man, habited in homespun, but bearing in general appearance unmistakable tokens of ease and comfort, so far as finances are concerned.

"I don't know what his Christian name is," pursued our friend, 'but he is the owner of some very fine oxen."

"Well," responded the stranger, "they all own some pretty fair oxen."

"But the one I wish to find has oxen for sale."

"As for that sir, I guess they'd any of 'em sell if they could get their price."

"But," exclaimed the Oxford county man, "the Mr. West I wish to find is quite wealthy."

"Yes? Well, I reckon there ain't any of them very bad off," replied the other with a nod.

"Why Mr. West," continued our friend, hesitating, "has been represented to me as a very close-fisted man, and not scrupulously honest in all his transactions."

With a curious twinkle of the eye, and a gentle pat on the paunch of his near ox, he said:

"To tell the truth, sir, I guess they are a close-fisted set all around, and I never heard that honesty run in the family. Isn't there something else?"

"Yes," replied the searcher for oxen, desperately, "they say he has been caught in the act of robbing his own brother's chiken coop.";

The stranger bowed and smiled.

"I guess I'm the man. Come with me, and I'll show you as fine a stock of cattle as you can find in the State; and if you know what oxen are, there is no danger of being cheated.

HE "STAID."—Lately, when the body of Geo. Kirk was lying at Wilson & Brown's undertaking establishment, on B. street, Virginia City, a man who appeared to be a stranger in the city, seeing something of a crowd about the door, approached and looked in at the body lying in the coffin.

"Man dead?" asked he of a person standing near.

"Yes, sir," shortly answered he who was questioned.

Fidgetting a little, the stranger tried it again: "How did he die?"

"Hung," was the laconic reply.

"Hung! Ah, hung himself?"

"No; he was hung by the Vigilantes."

Stranger again—"What did they hang him for?"

"He had been notified to leave the town, and he came back."

When a man has been notified to leave, can't he never come back here again and stay?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes? Then how is this?"

"Well, he came back, and"—pointing to the coffin—"you see he *staid*."

There is a man out in Wyoming who did not want for woman's wit when forced to do woman's work while his wife was on the jury. He appealed to her to come home, but she wasn't in any particular hurry, as "he would now find out how nice it was to stay at home and mind the children, while she was loafing around the court house as he used to do." The man went home and hired a good-looking cook, and sent his wife word to be sure and not come home until she wanted to on his account, but as soon as the news reached her she bolted immediately, and is now one of the loudest opposers of female suffrage.

H country poet, after looking about over life, has come to the following rhyming conclusion: 'Oh, I wouldn't live forever, I wouldn't if I could; but I needn't fret about it, for I couldn't if I would.'

An old negro woman, near Richmond, Va., is the veritable "oldest inhabitant." She says she cooked for de man what dugged de Jeems River.